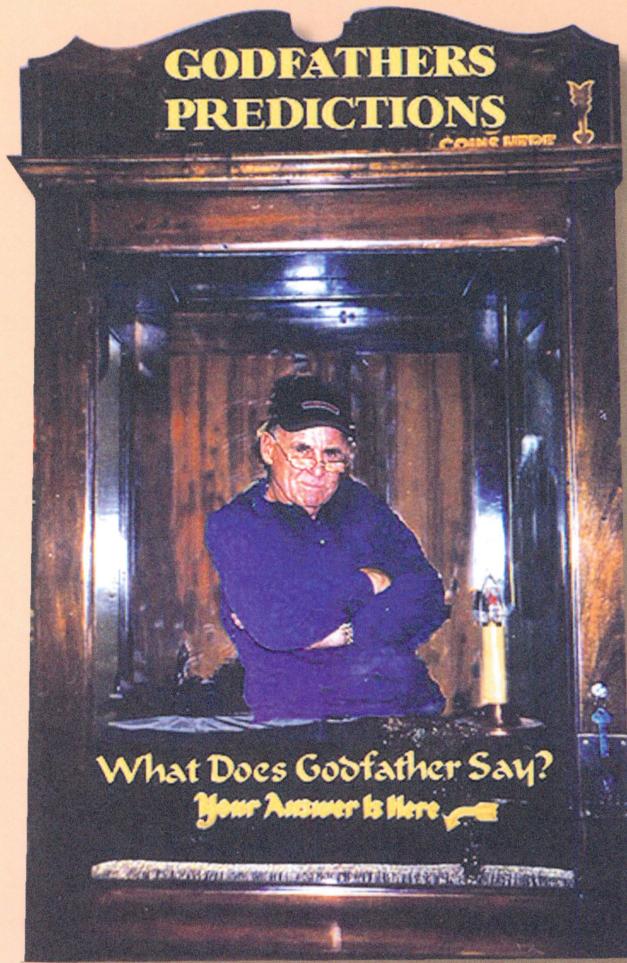


# C.O.C.A. TIMES

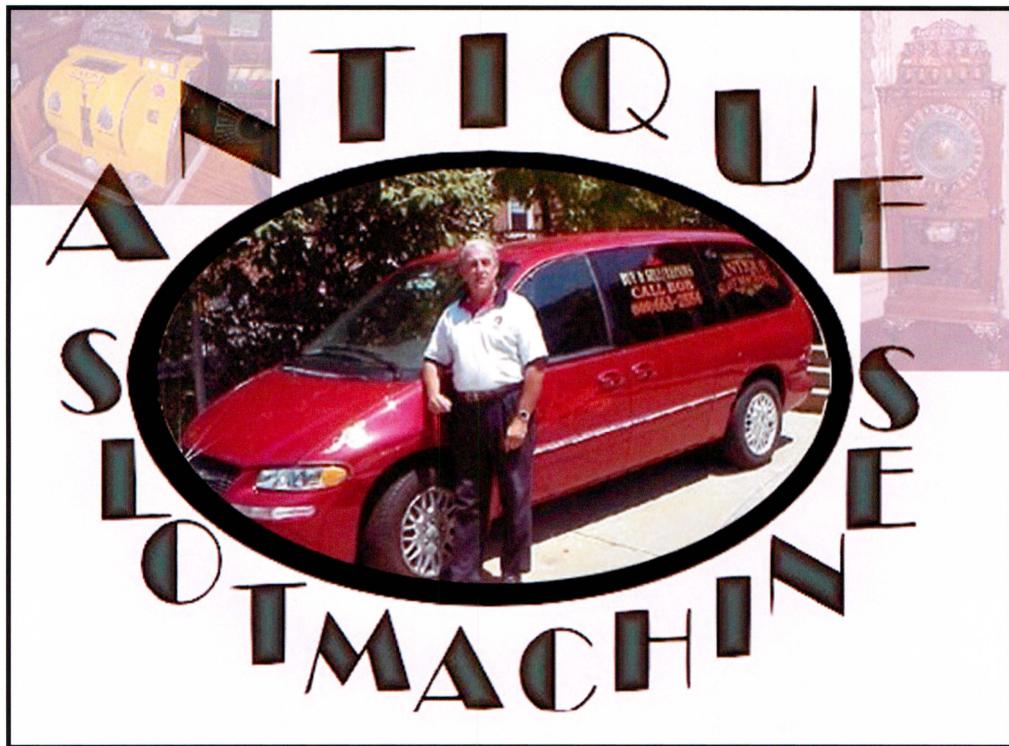
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## *Message from Our President*

Wow...summer is here and that means it's time for our annual convention! I know that the committee has been hard at work to insure a success. The weekend of July 21, 22, and 23 in Kenosha, Wisconsin is going to be a real coin-op party and I hope to see you there. Don't forget to bring something for the auction, even if it is just pieces-parts or literature. We need to work together for this fun event.

In our last issue we asked you to fill out a survey to help us plan for COCA's future member input. A huge thank you to Jackie Durham for sorting it all out! Here is what we found out about each other. Statistically speaking there are no surprises. Most of us are men between the ages of 45 and 65. We collect slots, trade stimulators, vending machines, and penny arcade. Approximately half of us also do jukeboxes and pinball. Nearly 20% also collect cash registers, scales, soda fountain, and music boxes. More than 80% of us said that coin-op was our main area interest.

We asked you to prioritize the types of activities that you would like COCA to continue, expand, or initiate. COCA Times Magazine was your #1 choice; nothing else came close! Other areas of high interest were: COCA newsletter,

internet site, Chicago meetings, convention, and local get togethers. The vast majority felt that COCA needed to be open to collectors of all types of coin-op regardless of age, including video games, modern slots and arcade. Many felt that we need much more input about common machines as well as the rare, unusual and expensive. Trips to Jaspers remain in high demand and many felt they should be held every other year and moved to Saturday night as an optional social event. Bus transportation was a plus and it was suggested that we should charge for it.

You suggested that meetings remain on Friday night from 7 - 9 and that light refreshments and a bar should be available. You enjoyed the speakers as well as the round table setup and discussions. You expressed mixed feelings on panel discussions and hands on machine repair and maintenance clinics at the meetings. Low priorities include an annual color calendar, mini-auctions in Chicago, and COCA logo apparel.

So....where do we go from here? We are hoping to form some new committees and enhance some old ones to keep us going and growing.

*See next page for a partial list:*

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**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: AUGUST 15, 2006**

- COCA TIMES ARTICLE INPUT - Help find new articles and photos for our magazine.
- NEWSLETTER - Determine costs, contents and distribution methods. This news vehicle should be different from COCA TIMES and not impinge on its quality.
- LEGAL COMMITTEE - Member/lawyers to help answer liability questions concerning officers, committees, website discussion forums and other COCA publications.
- LOCAL GET TOGETHERS - Determine which regions want to pursue these and help them get organized. This also could help us form a base for future convention sites.
- WEBSITE - This committee is active and seeking more help from members. Please read their report in this issue of COCA TIMES. They need ideas and volunteers.

- BUDGET - Help determine how we can best allocate our resources to give all members the most "bang for the buck." We currently spend approximately 70% of our income on COCA Times, so we must continue to be prudent with the remaining 30%.

We welcome your participation on these committees; please contact me via e-mail at [Bill@mebtel.net](mailto:Bill@mebtel.net), or call me at 919-304-4455 to express interest. We look forward to your responses; look for your ideas for future COCA growth in the next issue! Travel safely to Wisconsin.

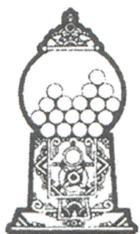
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# *“The Godfather of Coin-Op”*

## *Mike Gorski*

Cover story and photo editing by Bill Petrochuk  
Photography by Bill Lippay and Tim LaGanke.

---

Mike Gorski has been known as “The Godfather of Coin-Op” for some time now. He earned this title not only by being among the first to recognize the beauty, value and fascination of these old machines, but more importantly by his eagerness to mentor and share with his fellow collectors. A recent visit to Mike’s house revealed his latest find: the elusive Gent Manufacturing Company “Cleveland Godfather.” It was so named because it was made in Cleveland, Ohio along with its’ female cousin the “Cleveland Grandmother.” Mike unearthed this only known example concealed behind a false wall in an old billiard parlor less than 5 miles from his house in Westlake, Ohio.

Mike is currently working on replicating this mechanical wonder. Heavy quarter sawn oak with mahogany trim finished with special cut shellac graces the case. Behind wavy 100-year old glass with his arms folded sits “The Godfather.” Originally made of wax in Germany, the new face is made of space age polymers developed by none other than Disney imagineers. The foundation of the mechanism is a finely ground cam-shaft made from case hardened steel alloys, and has been triple chrome plated. Upon insertion of a penny, this living breathing automaton slowly unfolds his arms and moves his hand over the tarot cards before him. His other hand then picks up what appears to be a lit cigar. He raises it to his lips, inhales, and blows a puff of smoke in your direction. Finally his right hand picks up a fortune card and dispenses it to you! A large assortment of the original cards was found in the billiard parlor. Mike has had these cards replicated using old card stock on an antique printing press. Every detail has been perfectly matched.

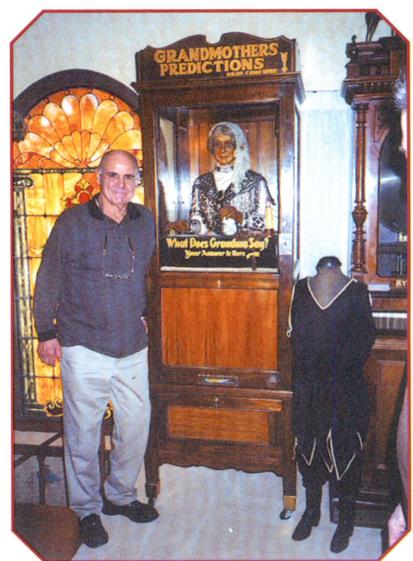
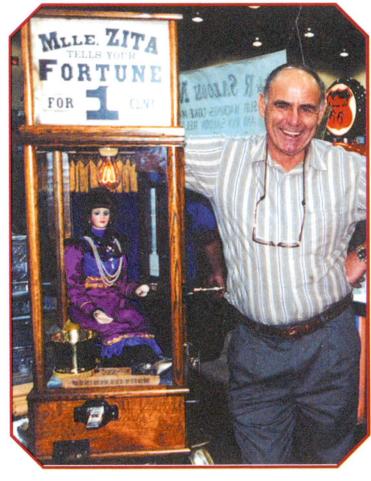
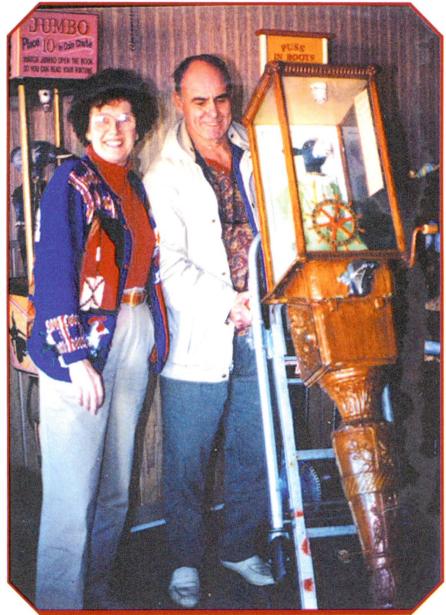
Mike has replicated at least 8 different pieces over the years including the Roover Madame Zita and Puss & Boots. He has also made the Caille Little Wonder

Lung Tester, and the Clawson Automatic Dice Machine. Mike estimates he has made well over 100 units in all. His other current projects are the Donkey and more Puss & Boots machines. Mike calls his machines replicas because he feels that he has captured all of the mechanics, woodwork, artwork, and attention to detail that went into the originals. These replicas sell in the mid-teens: an original goes for \$40,000 to \$60,000 and up.

Mike retired as a Captain in the Westlake, Ohio fire department. He also worked at landscaping and sold top-soil on his day off. His fascination with coin-op started in the early 1970’s when he wanted an old slot machine to put on the end of his bar. He started to place ads in local newspapers. He made some finds and placed some ads in The Antique Trader, a national publication. He met some people that were interested in coin-op, got inspired, and made some fabulous discoveries. He once found an old operator in Cleveland that had more than 100 Watling Rol-A-Top and Treasure slot machines. He bought them all for \$235 each, fixed them up, and sold them in sets of three for \$1,000. Believe it or not, it took quite a long time to get rid of them all.

Mike’s personal collection is very eclectic: penny arcade, three-reel and upright slots, peep shows, mechanical music, antique advertising, and more. All of his machines have one thing in common - “quality.” Mike has always kept the best and most unique things that he found for his personal collection. This formula still holds true, today more than ever. My wife, Lyn, once asked him to name his favorite find. Mike quickly pointed and replied “my wife, Marian, of course!” For more information on “The Godfather,” check out the great interview with Mike in the spring 1986 edition of

The Coin Slot magazine. To purchase one of Mike’s replicas you can see him at the Chicagoland show.



# —FRENCH FAN-DANCING-TASTIC—

by JOHN PETERSON

What is your learning style? Do you soak things up like a sponge, remembering everything after a quick once-over? Or are you more like me, stumbling along in a happy fog, missing clues left and right until someone points out to you the obvious, after which you have that “AHA!” moment? If you fall into my group, then you will identify with today’s adventure.

One of the many things I enjoy about the field of coin-op is the humanity behind the machines. Sometimes, that feature is clearly seen in the design of a game or its thematic presentation. I find this type of “humanity” more evident in games from Europe as compared to those created in the United States. One reason for this is our engineering prowess. After the turn of the century, our manufacturing expertise allowed American companies to produce thousands of high quality gambling and other coin operated machines in great quantities. We proudly perfected mass production and then used it to our benefit, turning out exact copy after exact copy in all areas of endeavor. Factories by Mills, Jennings, Mutoscope, Exhibit Supply and many others employed hundreds of workers in their quest to produce the best coin-op the world had seen to date.

Compare this to Great Britain where a major producer of games like W. E. Bryan of Bryans Automatic Works employed workers numbering in the dozens. British coin-op was strictly a cottage industry when compared with its cousin across the Atlantic. I like that smaller sized humanity of the British manufacturers. Their standardization was loose at best. Many parts were hand-crafted to individual games, including games by the same name produced by the same manufacturer. On the other hand, if you’re trying to find replacement parts for British games, this type of “humanity” can go a long way, sometimes too far. There is much to be said in favor of standardization.

Another part of “humanity” that I find most compelling is the uniqueness of the collectors whom I have met in my search for these games that I love. Three years ago I came across a game on Ebay that offered a “buy it now” option. The game was a French roulette machine called “Poker D’As” *Photo A*. My studies to that point had not included any games from France and I was at a loss as to how to evaluate this machine. The price appeared reasonable to me and I had a sneaking sus-



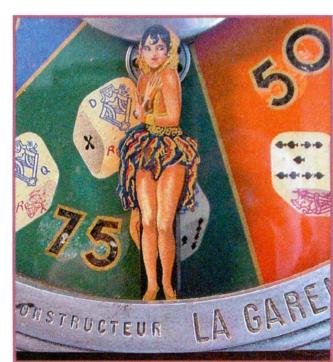
picion that it would not last long. Relying strictly upon my intuition, I snapped up “Poker D’As” and in doing so, added far more wealth to my life than just one French counter-top roulette game, as you shall see.

The French coin-operated industry in the first several decades of the Twentieth Century was very similar to that in the United States. There were several dominant French manufacturers who created the majority of the games. The games themselves were of very good quality and in my opinion, highly creative in design. Two names that you will frequently see in French production are Pierre Bussoz and Abel Nau. Smaller manufacturers abounded for short periods of time and produced a few original machines of their own or, more frequently, adapted models already on the market. The manufacturer of “Poker D’As” fit between those two groups. L. Loubet (1895-1979) made several popular games including a gun game, “L’éclair” that is much sought after by today’s sophisticated collector. He also found minor historical note as the one who made the first parking meter, the “Taxiparc” used at Orly Airport in 1960. In addition Loubet made several roulette games, including “Poker D’As” that was produced starting in 1932.

It is important to understand the differences between the French roulette games of the time and what we think of today as roulette here in the American market. The French games were a single wheel spinner, much like a Mills “Dewey” only being a much smaller, counter-top size. “Poker D’As” is typical of these roulette games that were very popular and produced in the thousands. They were the French equivalent of the American slot machine. As you can see, the player has the option of betting one or more of the three colors. After depositing your coin in the color of your choice in the coin slots at the top left, you turn the knob on the lower right. One nice feature is a “flag” which comes up in the set of secondary circles of the same color that are at the top right. This allows the proprietor to verify the colors played should a dispute arise after the game is over.

When the play knob is turned, the wheel starts to spin and the figure resting against the hub is pulled downward to the bottom of the wheel where it immediately reverses course and starts upward movement. Once the figure reaches the hub, it bounces up and down, slowing the wheel to a stop. If the color on the wheel under the figure is the one bet upon, an automatic pay-out is made in either a "50" or "75" token which then would be exchanged for something offered by the proprietor. As you might suspect, the makers used the central figure to produce games of compelling interest to the players. Figures ranged from the supernatural like the devil to military men, goddesses, and all classes of current day celebrities. For example, one of the more popular games called "Johnson" featured the champion American boxer Jack Johnson. This personalization for commercial purposes is more often seen in American pinball than in our gambling although several early floor model single wheelers were named after well-known Americans. As we know only too well, celebrity showcasing has definite attraction for the public at large. We want to be associated with the latest "star," even if is no more than playing a machine with the name and likeness of the celebrity upon it. (How else can you explain all those NFL or NBA jerseys out there?)

All this is rather esoteric and was completely beyond my cognition when I decided to buy "Poker D'As." I was going on instinct and little else. As Sandy Lechtick succinctly stated in his recent article "Pilgrimage To Chicagoland" ("COCA Times", July 2005,) "...sometimes you've simply got to take a leap of faith, and sometimes, a big leap. My advice – go with your gut.



You never know where you are going to see neat stuff, but when you do, assuming you can afford it, you have to step up to the plate." How true that is. Take a closer look in *Photo B*. This is the close-up of the figure on "Poker D'As." Look familiar? It certainly did not

to me. I thought it was a generic Betty Boop. After I had owned the game for months, I was showing it to a friend who remarked, "That's Josephine Baker." I stood there for a moment with my mouth open, staring at the figure that I had looked at 100 times before when I suddenly had that "AHA!" He was absolutely correct. The theme of the game is supposed to be dice but the maiden of honor here is none other than the Black

American Queen of the Folies Bergere, Josephine Baker.

Josephine is a fascinating story. Born in 1906 in St. Louis, Missouri, she started her career as a chorus line dancer. Recognized early as a precocious talent, she advanced rapidly to become a featured dancer in "revues." As a black woman in the 1920's, she faced the restrictions of racism and the Jim Crow system that demanded that she embrace her second-class status. Rather than submit, she moved to France where she became a head-liner talent in some of the most successful shows in Paris. *Photo C* is a picture of her from one of her many stage productions. She was very successful personally and financially. During WWII, she worked first with the Red Cross and later with the French Resistance. For her bravery, she was awarded the Legion d'Honneur from Charles de Gaulle in 1961. She adopted and raised more than a dozen children of different races and nationalities. In later years, she returned to the United States and played an important but quiet role behind the scenes of the U.S. civil right movement, even addressing the March on Washington in August, 1963. She died in 1975 of a cerebral hemorrhage. She was a remarkable woman with a talent that transcended more than one Continent.

As is usually the case for me, physically retrieving the game was half the adventure. The seller was a fellow in New York City who graciously agreed to hold the machine until I could arrange a trip to the City to pick it up in person. Several months later I was welcomed into the home of long-time collector and COCA member, Murray Gottlieb. Many of you already know Murray. For those who do not, he is a gentleman and raconteur beyond compare. Murray started collecting back in the 1970's when little was known about anything in this field. Armed with a small budget and good instincts, Murray was in the initial cadre of collectors who pioneered the early days of our hobby. Today, his collection and breadth of knowledge earn the envy of all who know him. Two of Murray's strongest qualities are his joy for the hobby and his willingness to share his knowledge with other collectors just starting out, collectors like me. After a three-hour tour of Murray's collection, he took me back to the airport and I escort-



ed Ms. Baker home in the cockpit of my Airbus 320. Since that time, Murray has been instrumental in my acquisition of other European coin-op games but none that captivate me quite like the one and only Josephine Baker. While I value this first game that Murray sold me, I prize his friendship even more highly.

If you've noticed a pattern to my articles, it is that I eventually get in over my head, sooner rather than later. Do not despair, I will not disappoint you today. After getting Ms. Baker home, I faced the task of getting her "dancing" properly again.

The mechanism is quite complex. Looking at the game wheel, you see that you can bet on three different colors with each color divided between either a "50" or "75" token award. *Photo D* shows the interior mechanism including the six different token tubes and the sophisticated mechanism required to accomplish the proper token award for each winning color and numbered token.

I was fortunate that my game came with a generous supply of both the "50" and "75" token awards. Suspiciously, it also came with a fairly large number of "play" tokens to be used in the coin slots. Why would a commercial gambling device from the 1930's be using tokens for play? It should have required the coin of the realm, a 25 centime French coin. Immediately, I began to dread some after-market "improvement." The hair on the back of my neck began to rise as I put a "play" token in all three colors to guarantee a "win" and then turned the knob, setting Josephine free. The wheel spun, Ms. Baker danced and I won! Or at least, the bell rang but no pay-out token. I cleaned and adjusted every possible component but still no pay-out. Fasten your seatbelt, here we go again.

The problem lay with the "play" tokens. The coin played is integral to activating the payout mechanism by way of cams. The tokens that came with "Poker D'As" were too small to lift the cams high enough for a payout. The problem was, these tokens were the largest coin that would fit through the coin entry. Josephine, are you toying with me? You must know by now, I lead a charmed life. Every time that I meet my match with these mechanical challenges, an angel appears and parts the waters for me. Within a month after I purchased my "Poker D'As," another sold on Ebay. I tracked down

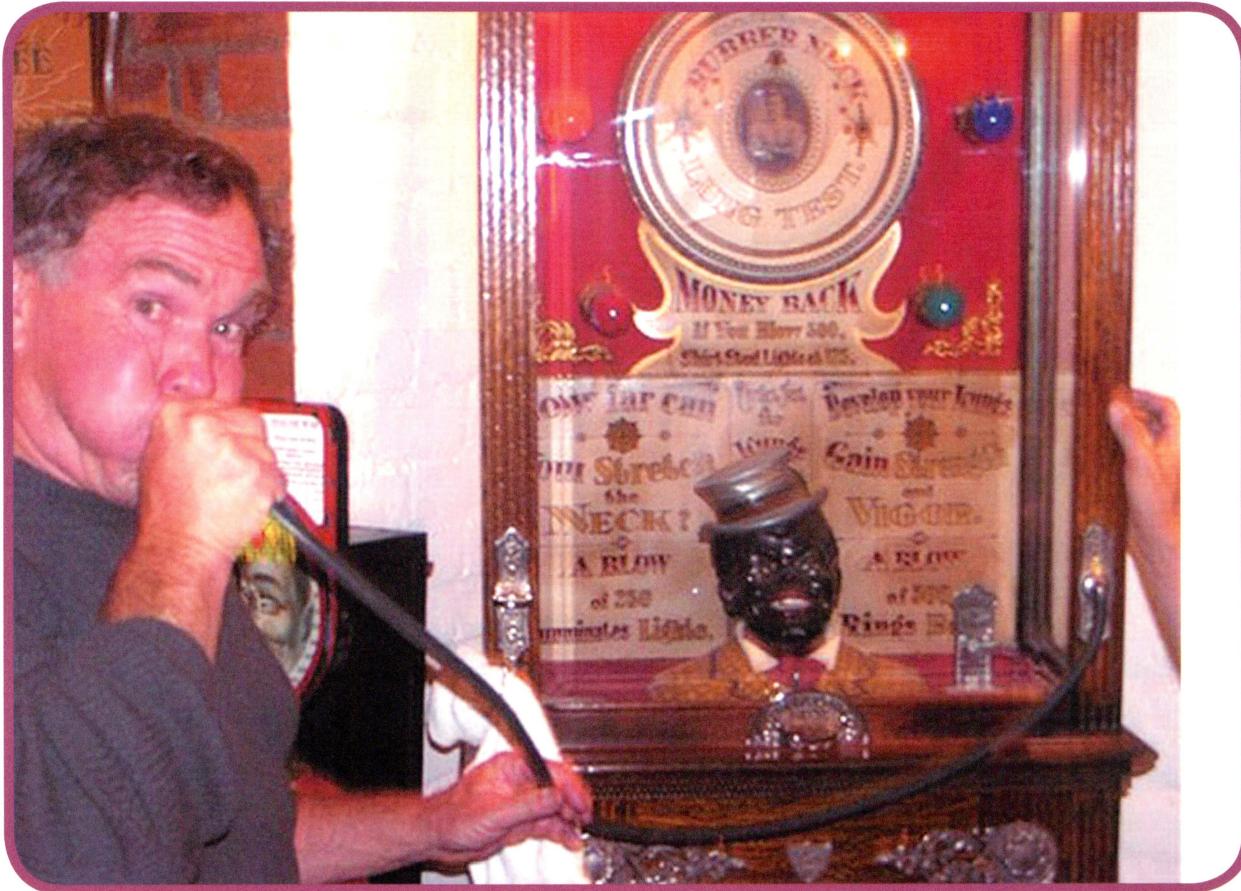


the purchaser of the second Ms. Baker and met another coin-op champion, Ric Gandy of Louisiana. For those of you who are not acquainted with Ric, he is the COCA guru of tokens. Ric was further along in the recovery of his game than was I. In addition, Ric is a genius and I am an idiot although I try not to take that personally. After describing my problem, he was able to figure out that my coin entry was at fault. Looking at mine more closely, I could see that someone had installed thin metal sleeve inserts into all three entry holes. The effect was to reduce the size coin acceptable from the original French coin down to my smaller sized token. The fact that the small token would not operate the pay-out system was deliberate. In addition to removing legal coinage from the play of the game, they rendered it an "amusement only" machine. I sent my coin entry to Ric and he removed the inserts for me. With the offending restrictors removed, my "Poker D'As" accepted the 25 centime coin and the game performed flawlessly. I divvied up some of my pay-out tokens with Ric and we both came out ahead. I also gained a valuable friend.

*Humanity.* It comes in many forms and it is the essence of this hobby that we find to be so delightful. From the machines themselves to the collectors who help one another as we seek to preserve our collective heritage, the human factor is the real treasure of collecting. Humanity crops up in the most unexpected places. Strictly from a cultural perspective, "Poker D'As" is a machine with historical significance. To my knowledge, it is the first commercial recognition in the field of coin-operated games of a successful American black woman as a powerful force in her own right rather than merely as a caricature. Sadly, it took a French entrepreneur from the 1930's to accomplish this by showcasing one of our brightest stage stars from the first half of the Twentieth-Century. This French roulette game now takes on special significance back home in America, more than 80 years after Ms. Baker left her native land for an equal chance at success. She has returned. She now dances for time immortal, delighting another generation of admirers, testament to the fact that great talent is ultimately timeless and colorblind.

*POST SCRIPT: Care to have an "AHA" chat about British or European coin-op games? My email is jp4@charter.net and my telephone number (952) 891-2312. Next time we'll explore that most basic human condition, temptation.*

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# C.O.C.A. Has a New Web Site

## **Have you visited the C.O.C.A. web site lately?**

If not, go to <http://www.CoinOpClub.org> now and take a look. Click on Register and we'll send you a User Name and Password so you can access all the Member Only features. Let us know what you think of the new site.

How did this new web site get created and what are some of its features? First, a little background

## **Background**

In January 2006, Bill Petrochuk formed a Web Team to design a new web site for C.O.C.A. The members of the Web Team are Ken Durham, Jason Sholar, Greg McLemore and Al Fox, all with many years of web experience. Jason Sholar is the person primarily responsible for designing the new C.O.C.A. web site look and creating some of its special features. Greg McLemore concentrated on modifying his highly successful message board so that C.O.C.A. can have one of its own.

The goal was not only to give the C.O.C.A. web site a new look, but also to provide a Members Only section with new web features. All of this had to be accomplished by March 31, the date of the C.O.C.A. meeting in Chicago.

The Web Team devoted over 100 hours to the effort. If C.O.C.A. had hired a commercial web designer, it would have cost over \$5000.

The web team unveiled the new site on March 30. All C.O.C.A. members with an up-to-date email address on file received user names and passwords to access the Members Only section. The new web site was announced and described at the March 31 C.O.C.A. meeting.

What was Accomplished? Below are some of the new features of the C.O.C.A. web site.

## **New Web Features**

### **A Classified Ad Web Section**

Anyone visiting the web site will be able to place a classified ad, but only C.O.C.A. members will be able to see the classified ads. This feature will give C.O.C.A. members an opportunity to buy or sell an item before it is offered more widely to the public.

### **Variety of Other Member Only Features**

- Photo Gallery to help identify machines
- Sources of Supply and Repair page
- List of C.O.C.A. members and their phone numbers
- Web links that provide useful information
- List of upcoming shows and auctions

### **Discussion Forum for C.O.C.A. Members**

If the Discussion Forum is not live by the time you read this article, it should be coming real soon. The web-based Discussion Forum will allow C.O.C.A. members to ask questions and share information with other C.O.C.A. members about coin machine collecting, Internet scams, buying and selling tips, and many other topics of interest. It will even have a polling feature that will allow C.O.C.A. members to cast their votes and then see how other C.O.C.A. members voted.

### **Help Us Enhance the C.O.C.A. Web Site**

The Web Team can design a web site, but only C.O.C.A. members can provide the content that makes the site a fun and useful place to visit every week. We need the help of every C.O.C.A. member, even those who do not use the web:

### **Post a Classified Ad - at least once a month**

Please place a For Sale or Wanted ad on the site each month. Be specific. A classified ad section is useful if it contains specific parts you need or if you have a specific item for sale. Don't list a general list of wants. That gets boring.

If you don't use the Internet, then mail us your For Sale or Wanted ad and we'll post it for you. Send it to C.O.C.A. 909 26 Street NW, Wash DC 20037.

### **Provide Us Pricing Data from Auctions, Shows & Ebay**

We need volunteers to help us collect pricing data. We plan to design the web site so that you can post pricing data even if you have no computer knowledge. We'll create a form, just like the classified ad section that automatically posts the information you provide.

### **Other Volunteer Opportunities**

- Become a Discussion Forum facilitator
- Create a photo album - What's wrong with this Machine?
- Collect Repair Tips from C.O.C.A. members and post on the Web Site
- Collect Information on Internet Scams and post on the Web Site
- Ask C.O.C.A. members questions & post answers on the Web Site
- Ask C.O.C.A. members how they display their coin machines and post on the Web Site
- Scan ads from old issues of Replay, etc., and post on the Web Site

## Give Us Your Web Address

If you have a web site, even if it is not very fancy, let us know and we'll list it on the Member Web Site section.

## Participate in the Discussion Forum

One of the most fun and educational features of the web is the Message Board or Discussion Forum. All C.O.C.A. members with User Names and Passwords will be able to participate. Ask a question. Express your view. Respond to other members' questions. The more people who participate, the better the discussion forum will be. Don't be shy.

But, remember, this is an open discussion forum and you need to be careful before saying anything negative about a specific person. All postings will represent the individual C.O.C.A. member. The information and guidance provided may or may not be correct. You will have to make your own judgment before making a decision.

## Join the Web Team

If you have web development skills, specifically knowledge of PHP let us know. We need help or it will take us a long time to add new features.

## Do You Need a Personal Web Site?

Jason Sholar, the person who did most of the design work on the C.O.C.A. web site, indicated he is willing to design web pages for C.O.C.A. members. Sorry, it won't be a volunteer effort, but if you are interested, contact Jason directly 313-608-0063 or email [jsholar@tiltbob.com](mailto:jsholar@tiltbob.com) and he can tell you what's involved and some of the cost options.

## Give The Web Team Feedback

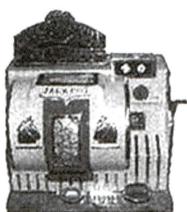
Tell us what features you would like on the C.O.C.A. web site. But remember, some features may be easy to create; while others may be very difficult and take many months to create. Others may be impossible for us to do.

Remember, even though your web team has some very talented people, they are volunteers and can only devote so much time to web development.

Be friendly, be constructive, and try not to be too negative. Remember, your volunteer web developers have feelings too.

OK, now submit your ideas and volunteer to help us.

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## ROBERT L. LEGAN

LEGAN ROBERT L. LEGAN, 67 years. Beloved husband of Madeline S. (nee Kalich); loving father of Robert M. (Dawn), Mary Beth (Scott) Finlay, Susan A. (Richard) Scheibenreif, and Martin J. (Kimberly); grandfather of Brian and Gregory Legan, Brandon Jones, Andrea and John Brookhouser; son of the late Louis R. and Agnes J. (nee Markel); son-in-law of the late Paul and Verna Kalich (nee Barron); brother of Thomas J. (Gloria); brother-in-law of Janet (Gerald) Noda. U.S. Marine Corps Veteran.

Bob was a good friend, fellow collector, great restorer and will be missed greatly.

# SLOT MACHINES FOR LOSERS

by BILL HOWARD

We all seem to be fascinated by losers. I remember one of my favorite comics as a child was titled "The Born Loser", about a sad sack suburbanite who never seemed to catch a break. More recently, mob gamblers in the movie "A Bronx Tale" had to lock one of their groups in a utility closet while they gambled at craps because he was such a renowned loser that he might bring them bad luck.

The coin-op industry in the 1930's must have had these born losers in mind when they designed a series of machines with a format that promising that, if you lost long enough, you won.



The most common of these loser machines was the Mills' Bonus. The initial style was the "Horsehead", while the later was of the "Hightop" variety. In either case a special jackpot was won when the player spelled out B-O-N-U-S on the top of the machine after losses that showed those letters consecutively after losing turns. Another rather cynical feature was the fact that no player in his right mind would walk away from a "bonus" machine that had B-O-N or B-O-N-U showing. The machine just kept sucking the player in. Many examples have survived, and this is the least valuable of the loser slots.



Next came the much rarer and more desirable "Kitty", manufactured by Pace. The losing progression in this machine resulted because it filled a separate "Kitty" by drawing the player's dime every time a cat appeared on the strip turning up. The Kitty was eventually paid out when the player played and came up empty ten times in a row. Not many Kitties were made, as

witnessed by the fact that I have found only one ad for the machine to appear in the trade journals, and it was for only one month (see the October 1937 issue of Automatic Age on page 83). This is an extremely valuable machine, particularly if in good original condition.

But the *crem dé mint* of the slot losers was the 1935 Mills Futurity. This slot employed art deco design by mounting a large dial at the top of the slot. When you lost ten times in a row and the dial climbed to ten, you got a separate jackpot. Again, when the dial reached seven or eight, not too many people quit. Although many Futurities were made in comparison to the Kitties, very few are in proper working order. In almost all cases, the futuristic feature is missing. The reason the feature is missing is because of its unique quality.

A player of the prior two loser slots must know that he is fighting the odds progressively as he tries to lose. What a player did not know when he played the Futurity, however, was that three special discs inside the machine changed the stops on the reels as the game progressed so that your chance of not losing and getting a cheap payout and going back to zero got greater as the different discs took over inside the mechanism in addition to the obvious progression factor that the player fought. This feature made the Futurity unique in that is the only three reel slot wherein the odds of winning change as the player keeps playing the machine. Although it might be argued that this was not a "cheat" feature like "plugging" a machine, because the odds of getting a winner kept increasing, the "winner" was actually a loser that put you back to zero and away from the "real prize" that tempted you. Certainly, any member of a gambling commission would not have bought the nonsense. This is the reason that, in my opinion, most of the Futurities have this feature ripped out. Remember, the Futurity was not long on the market before the beginning of our country's preparations for World War II caused the cessation of all slot production. Then, shortly after the end of the war came close government scrutiny of the slot as a cheat machine causing the dis-



closure "plugs" and the need for posted or "guaranteed" jackpots. Eventually, there came the Johnson Act and Las Vegas, where gaming commissions were created. Thus, it is no wonder that this sinister device was pulled from the Futurity, reducing it to a most uninteresting slot.

Many bargain hunters have purchased a gutted Futurity in the hope of some day acquiring the missing discs and dial and thus getting a wonderful machine without paying the stiff price that they command when complete. Do not succumb to this temptation, as it brings a slow, cruel death. Though some have tried, the duplication of this feature is both mechanically and cost prohibitive, according to replicator Mike Gorski. And when the Godfather of Westlake says that it can't be duplicated, you can pretty well hand it up.

So, if you have a complete working Futurity, give it a hug and rejoice. You have a wonderful machine.

*Photos from Paul Hindin Collection.*

## SILENT SALESMEN TOO

by Bill Enes

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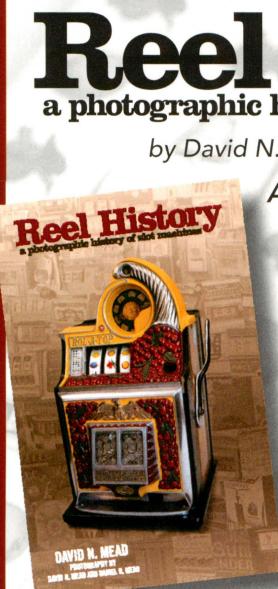
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# TALES OF THE HUNT

by Jack Freund

*This tale comes from Dan Davids, our C.O.C.A. treasurer. Let's title it....*

## FROM CURIOSITY TO ADDICTION

First a little background on my passion for, or should I say "illness with" collecting coin op, specifically Vending.

Almost 20 years ago I started collecting Coin Op, I had been deeply involved with cars, specifically mid-year Corvettes. but now I had a baby girl, and my hobby was about to change. Erick Johnson had begun collecting Coin Op, he had a slot and a couple of gum machines. Anyway he had come to visit for the 4th of July weekend, stayed at the house and brought me a Victor V as a thank you gift. (By the way he admittedly grossly overpaid for it at \$85.00. 20 years later we still sell them for that on eBay!) That was it, I started collecting Vending. Then I met Phil Cunningham. Phil was the one that pushed me to specialize (He's a Columbus Guy). I think his exact words were: "It doesn't have to mean you can't collect everything else. It just gives you something to focus on.". That was it, I chose Northwestern (I love the porcelain finish). Then a few years later Bill Enes started calling me "Mr. Northwestern". So now you know why I use "MRNW" as my eBay name today.

O.K. now to the hunt....

I decided to do a local fair in my home town (every October). Supposedly everything sold there has to be home made. I actually had to go in front of a board and explain that my restoration of Gumball machines, kind of, sort of, made them home made. Anyway they bought it and I was ready to sell. I sold so well on Saturday, that on Saturday night I drove out to Phil's and picked up more "inventory" to have machines to sell for day 2. I had business cards made up with hopes of follow up sales for Christmas gifts etc.. Needless to say I had a great show (Phil was happy too).

So about 4 months later I received a call from a lady that needed some globes for 2 machines. She had picked

up my card at the fair. We agreed to meet at my office (yes real work). She showed up and needed a globe for her Columbus model M. Then said she needed a globe for a machine... "just like this one, but it's green". She proceeded to pull an absolutely perfect Tan porcelain Northwestern 33 Junior from a shopping bag. Well after I composed myself, I first solved all her globe issues, supplied new decals etc., I let her know that I'd like to add that machine to my collection. She told me she would talk to her husband and let me know. A couple of days went by and she phoned to say that they had discussed it, and that if I wanted that tan Junior, they would trade it to me straight across, for another Northwestern Junior of my choice. Well, needless to say, my green 33 Junior left my shelf in a heartbeat (later to be replaced). So we set up a time to make the swap. She wanted to bring her husband to see my stuff. So one evening they came back to my office and they brought me a box of parts they had picked up over the years, We made the exchange on the machines and they gave me the box of parts. In this box was a pristine Brown porcelain NW 33 Peanut base! I had a brown lid -- 3 big scores in one deal! To this day that Tan Porcelain 33 Junior is the only one known, and one of the different colored NW 33 Juniors in my collection!

## Tale #2

*This final article comes from Steve Walker, Bentonville, Arkansas (the home base of Wal-Mart). Wouldn't it be nice if each item we acquired came with a little history and some nostalgia? Here is Steve's submission....*

Hi Jack,

I don't know if you would like this story for the magazine or not, but it meant a lot to me...When I bought my Climax 10 machine this letter came with it...I would call it a fantastic find...Can you imagine a young girl going with her Dad and working a vending route, learning to drive a 34 Ford, etc...I thought it was a great story...

*story on next page...*

Steve,

This is a little information I got from my mother. My Mom is 80 years old.

The gum and peanut machines: Grandfather Miller was retired from the big farm in Exeter and had moved to Manchester and after he bought the houses on Hanover Street where they had roomers and he also owned the two-tenement house next door, he no longer had time to do the peanut machines. Too much to do, so he asked my Dad if he wanted them. I don't know whether there was any money involved, but I suppose so. I was 14 when Grandfather Miller died - so it was a l-o-n-g time ago! My Dad took the machines and brought them to the cellar where he fixed and painted them all and made them in working order.

Every Saturday morning I would go with my Dad to fill the machines. They were located in garages mostly, and we would drive to all the surrounding little towns

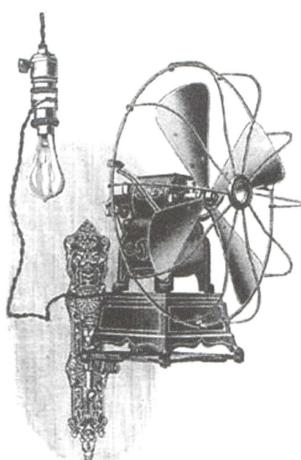
and he would empty the machines of their loot, I would count the money, we gave the garage man 10% - Dad would have rec'd a 50-lb. tin of peanuts and would then fill the machines and also the gum machines and we'd go to the next stop. It was there that I learned to drive - It was on country roads and Dad would let me drive. I was about 14-15. We had a 1934 Ford!!!!!! That's why I'm such a good driver, y'know! We always took a lunch - usually tuna fish sandwiches which we both loved. My Dad would share his thermos with me, and we had already stopped and bought each a small pie for desert. Boy, I loved those Saturdays. I was my Dad's kid.

When everything changed -- the filling stations and garages disappeared and Dad was getting older, he had to quit. But those mechanics and gas attendants sure loved those fresh Spanish peanuts!!!

*Well, there you have it....the last TALES OF THE HUNT. No one has sent me their tale, and without your participation, there can be no more. Please sit down right now and send me your tale. It's your turn to "crow" a little about that great find of yours.*

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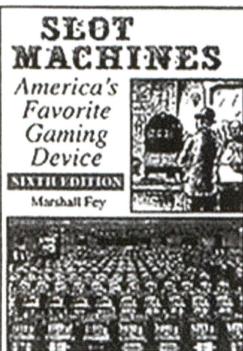


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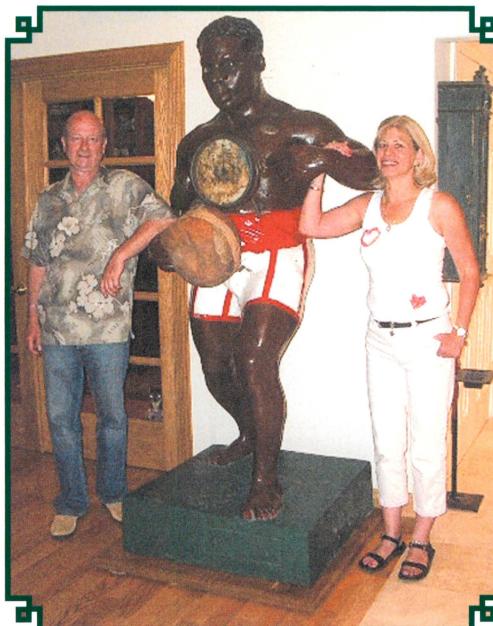
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(Thanks Claude)

# The Automatic Machine & Tool (Gabel) Owl Floor Slot Machine

The Search and Acquistion - by Salvatore Mazzeo

Like many other 3 reel slot machine collectors, I'd long dreamed of owning a floor slot machine. Sure, I had a nice collection (in my opinion) of 3 reelers, and an assortment of other gameroom antiques. But a floor slot machine would really cap off my collection. Well, after I had saved up for an inordinate amount of time, I started seriously looking on eBay and other auctions for such a machine. But although the big name auctions kept turning up floor machines, the buyer's premiums usually added 20-30% to the price. The floor machines were already rather pricey, and that made it even harder to buy one, or to justify buying one. So I focused on eBay to see what I could find to avoid the buyer's premium. In late 2004, I nearly bought a Mills Judge on eBay from one of our C.O.C.A. brethren, but got outbid at the end of the auction. That just made me hungrier to own a floor slot. (You know the feeling).

One distraction that made my eBay search more difficult was the proliferation of scams on eBay. This problem has been covered in previous C.O.C.A. articles and in other coin-op magazines. I'm referring to the African scams, where someone is trying to sell something they don't have. I inquired on a couple of floor slots where this was the case. One African tried to convince me that selling 'his' floor slot was small change to him, and to send him a Western Union money order quickly. After all, 'he had nine jets parked on a runway in Nevada'. Sure he did... I'd believe that if his jets were Matchbox car size. The outrageous stories and poor grammar become comical. And so this 'dance' went on for a while. In fact, before I bought my machine, I saw the same 5 cent Gabel Owl floor slot machine in eBay (that I'd later own) from another scammer. He had hijacked the photos from a previous eBay auction where the machine hadn't sold.

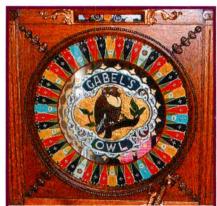
So when I saw a Gabel Owl floor slot again on eBay, I thought, 'OK, here we go again'. But this time, unlike most of the African scammers, this seller had been an eBay member for a long time. OK, so far, so good. I asked a few questions, obtained his phone number, and spoke to the owner. Based on his command of the English language, and lack of an accent, he obviously wasn't talking to me from Kenya. I was encouraged, and the Gabel Owl in the eBay photos looked beautiful and com-

plete. The seller, Mark from Florida, and I had further phone calls and emails, and I placed my bid, held my breath (there was another bidder or two I was competing against) and waited...

To make the wait even more difficult, I was out of town on the day of the auction, and couldn't get on-line until evening, several hours after the auction was over. I didn't know if I had made the successful bid or not.

But good things come to those who wait, and my bid was successful. I finally had my floor slot machine! Well, almost, since I still had to get it shipped to Cincinnati. But that went smoothly, and after a couple of weeks, I had the machine in hand. I reassembled it (there was some necessary disassembly for shipping) the evening I received it, and started to study the machine to see if it needed some adjustments. Based on our phone conversations, it sounded like there were a few mechanisms on the slot that might need to be adjusted. So I figured I'd have a few things to fix when I got it. But my rationale was that it was still a lot cheaper than paying an auctioneer's premium, so that was worthwhile. Besides, the machine had been beautifully restored. Some would say overrestored, since the coin head, handle and other hardware appeared to be gold plated, instead of with brass or nickel plating. But the restoration looked beautiful to me, so that didn't pose a problem. The oak cabinet was well restored, and the mechanism appeared

complete, although it looked as if it had been mechanically restored a while ago. See Photos #1, 2, 3.



By the way, to those unfamiliar with floor slots, John Gabel was the owner of the company that made these machines, known as the Automatic Machine and Tool Company. Dick Bueschel covered the history

of three Gabel machines in his slot machine books.

Well, the Gabel did need some adjustments, and that took some time, but it was fun and allowed me to better understand how it all worked. Before I describe the adjustments and repairs I had to make, let me first explain how the Gabel works. As Dick Bueschel described in his '100 Illustrated Slot Machine' books, the Gabel machines are well built, sturdy machines. The photos will help to explain how the Gabel Owl works. The coin head accepts 5 coins, and pays out from 10 cents to \$1.



See *Photo #4* – coin head separated from machine base. After you drop the coins in, you turn the lever on the right side of the coin head, and that drops the coins into the

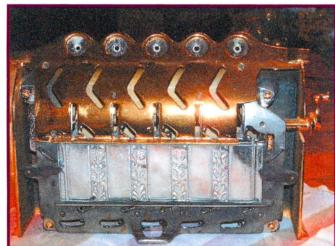
mechanism, allowing you to cycle the machine. Then you push the main mechanism handle down to the right, and the color wheel spins counterclockwise. If you have a winner selected by your nickel in the coin head, you're paid out in the coin cup on the left side of the cabinet. See *Photo #5*. Well, that was the process, but it wasn't paying out when I put my nickels in. Time to go to work.

Repair and Adjustments – Bringing the Gabel up to speed

I'll describe the problems as they arose, and how I solved them. This should hopefully be useful to others with floor slot machines who face similar problems, and at the same time, allow you to see how the Gabel works.

**First problem:** Coins were jamming in the coin head and then into the machine mechanism, preventing play.

**Solution:** First, I needed to get a key made for the coin head, which allowed me to take the cover off and



see what the problem was. See *Photo #6*. Then I found that one of the screws on the left side of the coin head had to be loosened. It appears that the plating process in

the restoration reduced tolerances on that side of the coin head, which was causing the coins to jam as they made their way down to the mechanism. To ensure that the screw on that side

of the coin head wouldn't become too loose, I put a thin washer in there to maintain sufficient tolerance for the coins to pass through, and retightened the screw. I also put a spacer in the lower coin housing, below the ornate brass coin head, where the coins went through to the mechanism, to keep coins from jamming in the red 10 cent payout coin slot.

**Second problem:** coin payouts were not lining up with the pointer at the top of the color wheel. It seemed that the correct color payouts were 5 spaces off. That didn't make any sense. Why would someone put all that time and money doing a beautiful restoration of this floor slot machine and then not align the color wheel? So before I started drilling holes in the metal color wheel, I explored different ways of lining up the existing wheel.

**Solution:** This was a simple fix. Someone had put the color wheel on upside down! This probably had been during some repair process in the past, after the initial restoration. So I switched it back and was back in business. See *Photo #7*.



**Third problem:** Some of the higher payouts (yellow 10 cent, Blue 25 cent and White \$1.00) were not paying out at all.

**Solution:** This didn't turn out to be a problem. It was the design of the machine, similar to '10 stop' wheels on later 3 reel slot machines with 20 symbols, 10 of which don't pay out. This was easy to figure out, based on my 3 reel slot machine experience. So that's where the 3 reel manufacturers had gotten that idea!

**Fourth problem:** After I put the mechanism back in the case, the machine required two handle pulls after a coin was put in to cycle it. Also, the machine wasn't paying out consistently on winners. Cycling the mechanism outside of the case didn't have these problems. It only occurred with the mechanism in the case, not when the mechanism was out of the case!

**Solution:** The first part of the problem could be deciphered by watching the mechanism cycle in the case. The handle hadn't been returning to the full reset position after cycling. That meant the handle had to be all the way to the left side for it to accept a coin and cycle the mechanism. This was resolved by oiling the handle and relevant other parts in that part of the coin accept

phase of the machine's cycle. Also, I made a mental note to ensure the handle was all the way to the left before pulling the handle down to cycle the machine again.

The second part of the problem took longer to diagnose. After examining the various moving and interacting parts of the mechanism, I could see that the handle shaft was rubbing against the main payout wheel. At first I thought about redrilling the holes in the wood case that the ornate cover plate fit upon. But I thought twice about that – this good of a restoration shouldn't need that kind of refitting-just like the thought process in second problem above. It turned out that the right side of the machine didn't have metal roller feet on the base, while the left side of the mechanism did. These roller feet allowed you to more easily slide the mechanism in the case. The missing feet caused the machine to 'ride' too low in the cabinet, so that the crank handle shaft was



rubbing up against the main payout wheel. See *Photo #8*. This kept that wheel from moving counter clockwise and completing payouts. I put a wooden shim underneath the right side of the mechanism. I could later decide if I wanted to get metal roller feet made for that side of the mechanism, as this appeared to be the original design.

**Fifth problem:** The higher payouts (yellow 10 cent, Blue 25 cent and White \$1.00) were only paying out 2 coins. I suspected the payout wheel was dirty, so was not moving far enough to the left (counterclockwise). It looked like the mechanism restoration was done a fairly long time ago, and there was some dirt and dirty grease in the mechanism.

**Solution:** It wasn't dirt in the mechanism that was causing the problem. There was a metal stop gear that contacted the payout wheel and kept the payout wheel

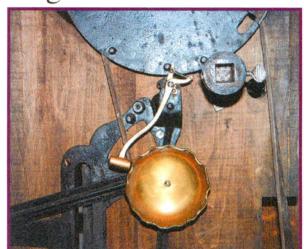
(with its connected leather strap) from moving to the bottom of the stroke. The completion of that stroke was necessary to complete the payout. So I removed the metal stop gear, which had no apparent purpose. Perhaps it was meant to be some type of anti-cheat device, but was installed incorrectly, or was missing some connecting parts. In any event, I didn't want this part if I wanted to have the correct payouts. Hopefully, some other Gabel owner reading this article will be able to shed light on the function of this part, if their machine also contains it. (Jim G. that's a hint for you to respond to my emails.)

See *Photo #9*

Also, I had to put a couple of washers in back of the bell, as that was rubbing against the leather strap, keeping it from completing its full cycle. The leather strap was used to actuate (cycle) the mechanism.

**Sixth problem:** The bell sounding a payout wasn't working. It would jam up the machine and keep it from making a payout.

**Solution:** The linkage for the bell wasn't hooked up correctly when I got the machine. Someone had apparently removed it after the original restoration, then re-installed it incorrectly. I had to figure out the correct order of the parts. Once I determined how it should be set up, it worked great. See *Photo #10* for the correct linkage arrangement.



*If you find this article interesting, let me know and I'll write a followup article with more detail on how the Gabel Owl works and pays out.*

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# THE SOUND OF MONEY, MUSIC AND PLAY RADIATED FROM PHEASANT RUN RESORT NEAR CHICAGO

by Jack Kelly

If you love vintage advertising, coin operated machines and juke boxes, the place to be March 31, April 1 and 2 was Pheasant Run Resort 35 miles west of Chicago.

Thousands of visitors swarmed into the resort's Mega Center to view and play -- and sometimes purchase -- antique slot machines, soda pop, gum and peanut vendors, juke boxes and vintage advertising offered by hundreds of dealers from all points of the United States and the world.

Early buyers paid a \$50 entry fee to shop the show on March 31, while more casual shoppers arrived April 1 and 2 for a more modest \$7 admission.

The dates of the show coincided with spring break for students, and one visitor was overheard saying, "I put the wife and kids on an airplane to Florida and told them I'd meet them there after the show." His buddy said, "I know what you mean, this is mecca and I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"We brought eight classic vintage slot machines to sell and by Saturday afternoon we had an empty booth," said dealer Larry DeBaugh, who set up at the show with son Fred, traveling from Kingsville, Md.

Known to collectors as "Mr. Watling," DeBaugh specializes in the Watling Slot Machine line which was manufactured in Chicago. Two of the gambling devices, a 1938 25-cent Cherry Front and 10-cent Bird of Paradise, sold for \$8,500 each. Both were fully restored.

The 30-year collector/dealer said he has 5 to 6 tons of original parts in storage, adding that he has "always been fascinated with Watling slot machines."

Baseball collectors swooned at the rarity and the price of a restored floor model 1937 Rockola coin-operated World Series baseball game featuring three-dimensional cast figures under a glass-covered playing field. It was offered by John Papa, National Juke Box Exchange, Mayfield, N.Y. The 47-inch tall completely restored game sold early in the show for \$43,000. At the same spot, a refurbished 1940 Wurlitzer juke box could play 78 rpm records at your place for \$20,000.

Another item catching baseball collectors' eyes was

a 1940s vintage tube-type radio shaped like a 9-inch-round baseball. Advertising on the "ball" said it was a "Selected Official League Ball." Dealer Pete Richter of Milwaukee priced the piece at \$1,600. "Beer and baseball belong together," quipped one shopper, pointing to a 26-inch-long reverse painted spinner-face glass advertising clock for "Our Beer" also offered by Richter for \$1,750.

Another Milwaukee dealer/collector, Paul Hindin, showed several very rare vending machines and a "tale of a fabulous find." Hindin says a seldom-seen early fancy cast iron Freeport peanut machine, showed up at the show and was offered to him by another dealer. The machine was offered for several days in a small-town Wisconsin estate sale at a price of \$65.00 when a picker found it and sold it to the Chicago dealer. Hindin valued the machine at \$11,000. Hindin also had some other rare machines including a very rare Columbus L machine, 17 inches tall at a price of \$12,000.

Juke boxes and peanut machines lit up the booth of Keith Miller of Akron, Ohio. Many people stopped to admire his restored 1951 Seeburg C juke box as it was playing 1950s 45rpm favorites. It was priced at \$5,000. At the same spot, a 1948 bright chrome Challenger 3-compartment peanut vender on a cast iron stand, with light-up top, could vend goodies at your home for \$700.

"It's very rare, very few were made," said dealer John Johnston, pointing to an all-original 1946 Filben juke box offered for \$7,900. Johnson recently sold part of his personal collection of 1,200 pieces at auction for a total of \$1,700,000, but says he is "still buying and selling every day." The collector/dealer splits his time between homes in Brooklyn, New York, and Hawley, Pa.

Not all items at the show were pricey and perfect. Bargain hunters willing to take on a restoration project checked out four different 1947 Seeburg juke boxes brought to the show by Brad Piedt of Benton Harbor, Mich. All were said to be "barn fresh" and priced between \$465 and \$675 each.

An unusual combination of coin-operated machines

and store mannequins filled the booth of Jerry and Phyllis Bohart of Dunlap, Ill. "He handles the machines, the mannequins are mine," said Phyllis who offered several examples of the store pieces, some decorated with custom artwork. Coin op collectors checked out a Northwestern 33 gumball machine for \$225 and two Daval penny-operated trade stimulators priced at \$325 each.

Both circus and advertising sign collectors hovered around the booth of Robert Kindness, Bloomington, Ill. The object of desire was a Barnum & Baily Ringling Brothers Circus 16-inch-diameter porcelain advertising sign once worn on the forehead of an elephant.

The unusual advertising sign was complete with leather straps containing 45 one-inch chrome buttons embossed with the famous circus name, and a price tag of \$4,950.

"Step up for a haircut and shave," quipped one shopper, pointing to an 1874 walnut barber chair offered by brothers Leonard and Paul Goedken of Luana, Iowa. The vintage chair was complete with swan head handles and original mohair covering. It could be displayed at home or barber shop for \$1,250.

Restored vintage soda pop machines were seen in many booths at the show, but a completely original Coca-Cola 1957 Vendo 44 caught many an eye at the booth of Marty and Sharon Noe of Park Ridge, Ill. The 58-inch-tall slim style vendor could cool the famous soda at your place for \$3,200.

"I'm going to give everyone the bird," quipped Carl Lepiane, of Los Gatos, Calif. The dealer was pointing to a 24-inch-tall full figure stork holding an advertising sign in its beak. The 1930s store display, for Castle Hall cigars, carried a price tag of \$500.

Although most of the chatter at the show was in English, it was not unusual to overhear conversations in different languages, as the event draws an international following. Willem Emo and Jan De Hann traveled to Chicago from Holland, the Netherlands, while a mother father and daughter team flew in from Centro, Ferrara, Italy. Twenty five year old Quadrelli Tiziana acted as a translator for her parents while negotiating for deals at the event. The overseas buyers filled ship containers parked nearby with vintage coin-operated machines, advertising signs, traffic lights and other items with American flair.

Reports on sales from dealers during the show contained the usual mix of "sales were soft" to "the best show I've ever had."

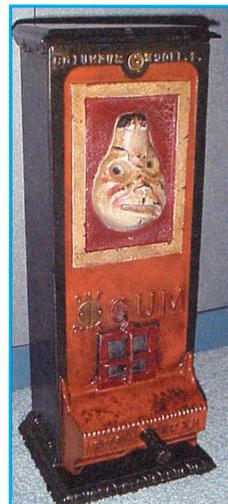
The next semiannual Chicagoland show will be held Nov. 10, 11 and 12 at Pheasant Run Resort, 35 miles west of Chicago in St. Charles, IL. For more information visit [HYPERLINK http://www.chicagolandshow.com](http://www.chicagolandshow.com) or by telephone at 1-847-244-9263.

*more photos on next page*

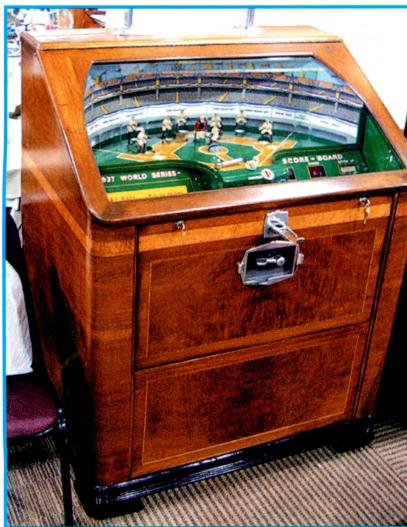


*The Chicagoland show promoters took a break to try one of the fun items at the event. From left are Dawn and Kevin Grego, and Bob and Penny Traynoff. The 9-foot-long vintage United Bowling Alley was offered by Home Arcade, Lisle, Ill.*

*Serious collectors oohed and ahed over the early 1900s Columbus "L" vending machine that took a penny--and could be taken home for \$12,000.*



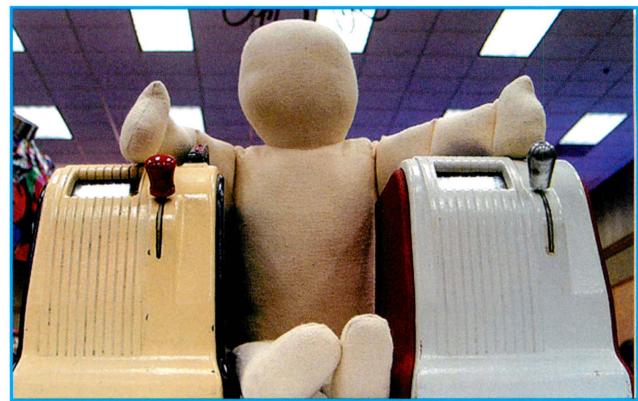
*Quadrelli Tiziana of Italy (middle) looks over a vintage juke box with fellow overseas buyers Willen Emo (top) and Jan De Hann of the Netherlands.*



A coin operated floor model 1937 Rockola World Series baseball game sold early in the show for \$43,000.



This rare 17-inch-tall early 1900s Freeport vending machine carried a show price of \$11,000. Machine was purchased on the way to the show.



This store mannequin appears to be coveting two Daval penny operated trade stimulators. The cloth dummy was priced at \$25 and the coin op machines \$325 each.

A completely restored 1951 Seeburg "C" juke box, for \$5,000.



Tom Gustwiller of Ottawa, Ohio checks out a 25-cent Caille double-nude center pull slot machine purchased on the way to the show.



A rare 1946 Filben juke box was priced at \$7,900 by dealer John Johnston.



Shopper Dina Buczowski looks over the 1940s advertising sign and leather harness originally worn by a Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey circus elephant.



Dealer Paul Hindin looks over the 28-inch-tall Hance electric peanut machine offered for \$3,595 at the Chicagoland show.



The father-son team of Larry and Fred DeBaugh traveled to the show from Kingsville, Maryland.

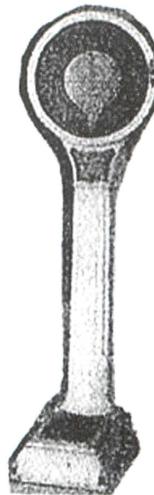




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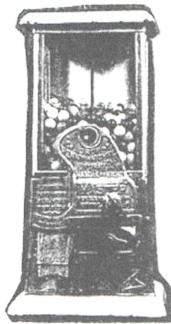
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# THE INCREDIBLE MILLS TWENTIETH CENTURY FLOOR MACHINES

by Johnny Duckworth

frustration of someone stealing your idea back then but we all know you couldn't get a patent on gambling devices, as the U.S. Patent Office has always had a strict policy against issuing a patent on any gambling device. Even in the parts of the country where they were operated legally, there was no protection against the theft of a slot manufacturer's design.

The coin head on the Mills 20th century is one of the biggest differences which separates this machine from all the others. The coin head is located in the top of the cabinet and is graced by a beautiful bare breasted winged lady on each side. The coins are dropped by the player into the slots on the top of the coin head for the color you want to play, and when you crank the handle one full rotation, the coins will fall down into the front viewing window. As the wheel spins, you stand there waiting for it to stop on the color you just placed your bet on. The viewing window is much like the other floor machines of the time as it holds the last few coins played on each color in order to verify which color was bet on as well as to make sure that everyone was using real money. This was part of their anti-slug and anti-cheating devices.

The mechanism in the 20th Century is fascinating. When you turn the handle it sounds like a big ratchet gear with springs popping & cracking the full turn of the handle. Once you have turned the handle a complete rotation, the wheel takes off spinning very smooth and quiet. If you are lucky and hit a winner, the coins are sliced out of the end of the coin tube, one at a time, by a large wheel with fingers and they then fall into

the payout cup with such an incredible sound. There are several other machines that slice the coins out one at a time but not in the exact same fashion or with the sound as the 20th Century. The McDonald Manufacturing floor models represent the closest I have found with the same slicing of the coins but on a much smaller fingered wheel.

Another great feature on the Mills 20th Century is the fact that it came with an 8-way coin head on both the nickel and the quarter model. Most of the machines of the time were only 5 and 6 way play. The half and dollar models for the 20th Century had only a 5-way coin head, but that was due to the lack of room, as the big coins took up so much space in the coin head. The half and dollar models also have a little more intricate design on the front wheel glass as it has a scalloped edge of glue chip and paint around the border. Less than a half dozen dollar models are known to have survived, and the original machines that have surfaced over the years have

also had the Mills Jockey race horse wheel under the front glass. The diameter of the Mills Jockey wheel is much smaller and this is the reason for the scalloped edge of the glass which fills in the empty space around the outside edge. One thing is for sure; if you want any floor machine in the dollar denomination, the 20th century will be your only choice, unless you can turn up a revamped dollar Dewey. These were made up by Charlie Fey in the 20's, but none have ever surfaced.

The mechanism used in the Mills 20th century is also the same one used in the Mills Roulette machine, except

The Mills 20th Century floor machine, which was produced at the turn of the last century from 1900-1916, is a very sought after machine by collectors today. This "upright" has a look like no other floor machine, which is amazing as almost everything was copied by the manufacturers back then, such as the Owls, Deweys, and the list goes on and on. If they weren't copying the name of a machine, they were reproducing castings or parts from it. I can't imagine the frustration of someone stealing your idea back then but we all know you couldn't get a patent on gambling devices, as the U.S. Patent Office has always had a strict policy against issuing a patent on any gambling device. Even in the parts of the country where they were operated legally, there was no protection against the theft of a slot manufacturer's design.





the mechanism is laying flat on its back in the cabinet on the roulette. The 20th century cabinets came in oak or mahogany and there are several different cabinet styles on the 20th Century.

The catalog for Mills in 1902 talks about the machines doing well in summer and winter resorts and also places with a large transient trade. They also talk of the machines paying themselves off in only 24 hours. The owners and operators must have listened as a Mills Two-Bit Twentieth Century in the photo's turned up in a beautiful old hotel by a good friend in the late 70's. The machine had graced the lobby of this elegant old hotel in Wisconsin which had been shut down for some time. These old floor machines are so impressive and to think of all the locations these would have been placed is incredible. You can only imagine what they would look like in the lobby of a grand hotel as people checked in and out, or in that dusty old saloon with the wooden floors and swinging doors, or even in those beautiful resorts where the well to do would relax. Keep your eyes open as you never know when you may stumble onto one of these great machines.



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# ORIGINAL MACHINES, REPRODUCTIONS AND THOSE IN BETWEEN

by Sandy Lechtick

Thousands of years ago, Vladamirsletskursky Mills – the caveman who made the original rock-tipped quarter sawn oak spear, got really pissed off when he heard that Klucko Caille had copied his design. Klucko figured he'd have a better chance of getting the girl if he had a fancy spear with his name on it. Anyway, Vladamir beat him up, and exclaimed, "That spear is a repro. No fakes in this cave".

Ten thousand years later, in the world of coin-op machines, the controversy continues. The "purist" will say "Never". "I wouldn't be caught dead with a reproduction". It is, he will say, a "fake" "a charlatan, an imposter". "It's cheating." Why would the true collector buy anything other than the "real McCoy"? In fact, one may ask, why would any collector settle for second or third best?

It's no secret that high-end collectors buy the best examples they can find – in pristine, original condition. The nicer the patina, the better. In the world of numismatics for instance, the high-end coin collector will only focus on B.U. – "brilliant, uncirculated", "extra fine", or mint condition coins. (When I was a twelve-year-old penny collector, I would have killed for a 1909-S-VDB, even with a bullet hole in the center!)

While there too are limited editions and a scarcity of rare coins or stamps, especially "B.U.", even in those categories there still exist a few hundred or more of very rare editions in various denominations. But in the world of coin-op machines, there may be just one, perhaps two or three and in some cases, a mere handful. So, what does one do when some of the most desirable machines, the ones you're salivating over, are simply way out of reach? Or when they do surface, have a price tag that would choke a horse. And then in that rare moment when that super great, highly coveted Holy Grail machine descends from the heavens, there are already half a dozen giant killers lined up and ready to sell their first born for the privilege of owning it.

Certainly, if David Copperfield or Jasper De Sanfilipo decided to sell a "one of a kind" from their extensive collections, the name "Sandy Lechtick" would not be the first card in their rolodex. In fact, they'd say "Sandy who?" Jasper, David or the other King Tuts already have their "preferred" short list of longtime fellow collectors – Rob Rasnick, Ken Rubin, Jim Grimwade to name a few.

But going back to one issue perpetually argued by experienced collectors – when does original start and where does reproduction begin?

If an original machine is 20% reproduced parts, is it an 80% original and therefore original or 20 % replica and therefore not truly original? Is the question, what parts have been replaced or copied – the "mech", the cabinet, and the

coin entry the key issue? What percentage of original parts does a machine have to have to be considered "true"? What about some reproduced parts but original cabinet and original mech? Is the key the mech and everything else window dressing? If 70% of the original mechanism is there, but most everything else is designed and made by Gary Taplin, is it partially real and therefore a reproduction? When does original end and reproduction start? Or, is the real issue, how important is that part to the integrity of the machine? To some, if certain coin-op machines have non-original parts added, to guarantee a working machine, it is not truly a real original. Others would argue so what? Who cares? How can some machines a hundred years old not have parts that were designed and manufactured a century later or "borrowed" from another machine? Are "borrowed" parts ok, but modern fabrications not? Is it ok, if they look real, look old? Or, is the real issue, disclosing the fact that the machine is not an original or specifically what parts are not original?

What about second or third generation spears – or coin-op reproductions that look, feel and play almost as good as the original and in some cases better. To many, that concept would be analogous to running their fingernails down a chalkboard. To others, the thought of owning a reproduction or "replica" would be worse than a five-hour root canal – without Novocain.

So, then why do so many knowledgeable well-heeled collectors have Mike Gorski's Fortune Tellers, affectionately called "Roovski's"? And why did several previous collectors own so many of Steve Gronowski's reproductions, and yet others own Polk figure slot machine replicas?

Indeed, Mike single handedly created a market for superbly crafted, expertly designed, outstanding machines that not only took your breath away but also were exact replicas of the original. Of course, I am talking about his reproduction of the early 1900's Roovers Madame Zita, Educated Donkey and Puss N Boots Fortune Tellers. With but a handful of original Zita's, Donkey's and Puss N Boots in existence, some would argue, especially the few lucky (or rich enough) to own an original, that reproductions – no matter how well made, dilute the market value of the original. Yes, perhaps if the market were flooded. But Mike made a relatively small number of his Fortune Tellers over a 20-year period. And after his last run of 18 Puss N Boots, to be completed in the next few months – that will be it. No Mas. An era will have ended.

Mike enabled a number of collectors the opportunity to add very cool looking, very collectable items to their collection – where they would have had to pay significantly more money for the original – assuming they could find one.



Mike gave collectors such as myself the opportunity to add great additions to a collection with a product that looked and worked as well as the original – perhaps better – at a much lesser but reasonable price. It is not an accident that his fortune-tellers have appreciated and will continue to appreciate. When I bought a Roovski Madam Zita two years ago, I had to pay \$4,000 more than when Mike sold them ten years ago.

At the April 2006 Chicagoland Antique Coin-op Show, I was confronted with the opportunity to purchase one of the most beautiful, rare and sought after floor model arcade machines – a 1902 Bow Front Electricity Is Life from John Pappa, President of National Juke Box Exchange. But it wasn't an original. It too was an exquisite reproduction that looked and operated every bit like the original. Officially made in 2005-2006, you would be hard-pressed to tell the difference between the original and the repro. (Ok, Doug Dubena and Mike would know – but not many others). In fact, if it were side by side to the original, only the most trained expert eye would go "Ah-ha!" John made exactly ten, and no more of these machines. When he offered me one, he had three left.

The night before the March 2006 Chicagoland Show officially started, I dined with heavyweight arcade collectors Ken Rubin, Ira Warren, Bob Peligrini and Eddie Mazola (Eddie and Bob had created a huge ripple at the March 2006 Victorian Casino Auction in Las Vegas by their "kamakazi bidding"). Anyway, we were all discussing amongst everything, the Bow Front Electricity Is Life. Bob commented that he had bought an original in great condition five years previous for \$50,000. Someone else suggested it was today probably worth \$60,000, maybe \$70,000. Since none had come up for sale lately or sold at auction, "true market value" was hard to determine. Yet the experienced educated guess was \$60,000 at least.

The price that John wanted on his Bow Front was steep, but much less than an original. In fact, when I first discussed the machine with him and he told me the price, I am glad I was sitting down – and if I weren't, I would have hit the ground with a thud. I played mental handball with two thoughts (a) "that's a lot of dough" (b) "who would pay that much for a replica?" "What is it made of gold"? I had already spent a lot more money at the show than I intended and the 1200 square foot arcade I was building at my house in Southern California was a never-ending bottomless money pit. I passed.

While John had told me about the machines the night before, it was hard to visualize paying that much – especially for a copy – no matter how finely crafted. But then I saw one the next day. My jaw dropped.

Perhaps the sun was hitting it just right, kind of like the shine in a woman's hair at just the right angle. Talk about a blow to the solar plexus. The machine was exquisite. Even the most discriminating collector I've ever met – Ken Rubin, who detests "knock-offs" couldn't believe his eyes upon viewing the Bow Front in front of John's truck. The hug he gave John spoke volumes about his sign of approval (or perhaps they were just glad to see each other). Not long after, I

happened to run into Tim LaGanke, another highly discriminating top, top collector (who had recently sold most of his multi-million dollar arcade collection to Jim Grimwade) and he told me he had bought one. That's like Houdini giving his blessing on your latest card trick. Within 24 hours all nine were spoken for, with one left. That night after tossing and turning, I concluded the question wasn't, why should I buy one, the question was – how could I say "No"?

By then though, there was a good chance that the final one was gone and I hadn't made up my mind fast enough. But, as soon as I spied John approaching his booth inside the convention hall on that Saturday morning, I swooped in. He had just the one left and wouldn't commit right away. It was like he was giving away his last and favorite puppy. He was quite firm on price and terms and I had to pay in full, pronto. Ultimately though, I beat him in an arm wrestle match and his last Bow Front had just become the newest addition to Sandy's arcade collection.

So, what's the bottom line? It seems to me that all of us have a passion for coin-op devices and machines, yet we all have different interests and views on what type of collection we wish to assemble. Some are "purists" and have been collecting for ten, twenty or thirty plus years. Many of those guys can afford to be purists because they were able to buy so many great machines before they went through the roof or have more dough than God, or both. Others don't necessarily care if every nut and bolt is original or if the patina isn't quite perfect. And some, like myself, get lucky every once in a while on acquiring a few nice pieces but will step up to the plate on cool machines and even spectacular looking, well designed replicas.

Machines that generate instant visual impact in what I call the "wow" factor or machines that are either unusual, you don't see too often, or are simply fun to play, get me going – even if they're not prominently displayed in Drop Coin Here. Unlike a few of my high-end collector friends, I don't focus as much on potential resale value. Perhaps I should, but I don't. But I do like good bang for the buck. Therefore, Gorski's Fortune Tellers or Papa's Electricity Is Life, all finely engineered exquisite reproductions that look every bit as good as the original, add to the feel and look of the collection I am assembling. Clearly, 99.99% of my friends, who are not died-in-the-wool coin-op junkies, have absolutely no idea what's original, what's a repro, the difference between the two – or the huge gap in cost. It's like the Clairol Blond – only you know. But, after the "oohs and ahs", I do tell them what's original and what's not. Obviously, if I ever sell a replica, I would disclose that fact before striking a deal.

In short, buy what turns you on, what strikes your fancy, what helps you achieve your collection objectives. After all, are you collecting for yourself or other collectors? Perhaps both! As you upgrade your collection, (as I am doing) you can always put the stuff you bought when you were drunk, blinded by the sun, or outgrown on EBAY..... or in the next auction!

*Sandy Lechick, an avid penny arcade and automaton collector in California can be reached at [sandy@coinop4trade.com](mailto:sandy@coinop4trade.com) or (818) 712-9700*

# “NATIONAL” Circa 1900

## WEIGHING MACHINE SCALE

by JIM AND MERLYN COLLINGS



This handsome cast iron scale found its way throughout the United States (photo 1). It was commonly seen at railway stations, street corners, outside stores or near any high traffic areas. The segmented column resembles a turn-of-the-century sidewalk clock or lamp post. This historic scale was one of the first coin-operated scales used throughout the country.

Leroy Baldwin from Rutland, Vermont envisioned the potential of marketing this fine scale. He was a skillful promoter who set up scale franchises and issued stock from his National Weighing Machine Co. in New York City. The classic “National” design was established when Baldwin joined forces with a designer named Herman E. Patterson of Passaic, New Jersey. Patterson got some of his ideas by studying the earlier Fairbanks and other scale designs into the 1880’s and 1890’s. His patent for the National Weighing Machine Co. in 1891 was issued for a case design. By 1900 the scale was available for distribution.

A height and weight chart dial was invented by Leroy Baldwin in 1900. This new innovation promoted greater sales as potential patrons noticed the health charts and used the scales more frequently (photo 2). The height and weight chart table was furnished by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. of New York City.

The “National” scale pictured in photo 1 was also called the “visible” scale. It is 72 inches high and 16 inches wide at the base. There were some dif-

ferent dials or faces used on the National scale, such as, blue and white porcelain, red and white porcelain, the semi-circular “visible” and the “curves ahead” (photo 3). The “curves ahead” dial was often used at railroad stations. It reads: Curves Ahead - Watch Your Weight. Which probably meant the train met with curved tracks and overweight patrons might develop their own curves.

Charles B. Trickey an 1890 franchise and operator



from Norwood, Ohio is mentioned on our scale dial (photo 2). This same scale is pictured in Rich Penn’s Mom and Pop Stores book, page 268, where it resided in a barber shop setting (photo 4).

The National scale was usually painted in silver and sometimes had a bronze-like appearance and also had other color combinations as well. The scale features a built in marquee that says:

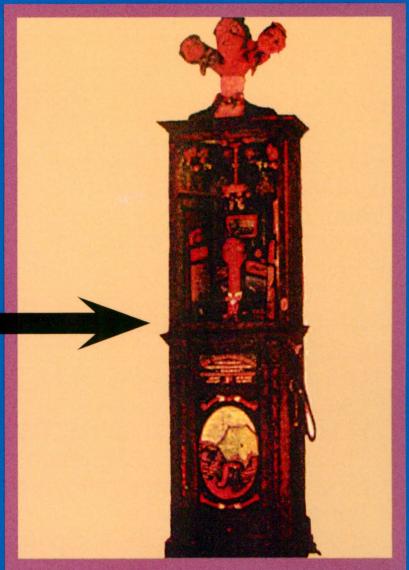
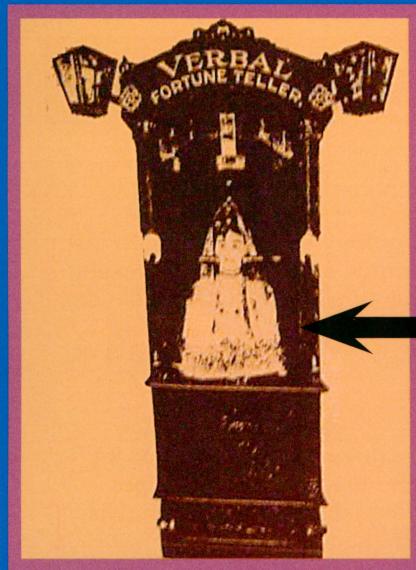
Correct Weight / One Cent (photo 5). A small white cameo on each side of the column (that resembles a Greek god) is shown in (photo 6). There are also scattered embossed leaves on all four sides of the column. There is one panel on each side on the head that is removable, that allows the operator to service and adjust the spring mechanism. This was a clever way to maintain the scale. The

cash box is located on the left-hand side of the column even though the coin entry is on the right. There is a double lock assembled to safeguard the coins. The footplate or platform reads: National Weighting Machine / New York (photo 7).

When we acquired this wonderful scale we found an original vendors record envelope inside the cash box (photo 8). The envelope reads: Lee’s Bar New Richmond, Ohio which later became Bischoff’s Bar. The record information kept indicates the following: starting in April 1952 thru August 1957 the monies were picked up three times a year, spring, summer and fall. Over a six-year period only \$39.35 was collected. How times have changed! This illustrates how this scale still attracted patrons for over 50 years.

This National scale should be an absolute must for coin-op collectors since this is the grand-daddy of them all.





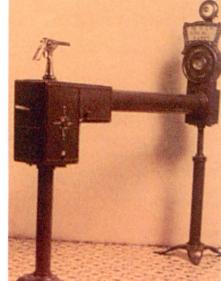
**\$1000 to \$4000 REWARD for information leading to the purchase of these or ANY other machines. I will buy ONE PIECE or ENTIRE collections. "Call me if you're looking for something. I might be able to help."**



**ALL DEALINGS KEPT CONFIDENTIAL and even if not interested in selling, give me a call. I like to talk about coin-ops and to meet other collectors.**

# CONTACT JIM GRIMWADE

**Cell (616) 450-0967 • Work (800) 613-6865 Ext. 0  
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# - CLASSIFIED ADS -

**FOR SALE:** 5 cent Dixie Bell, 25 cent Columbia DeLux, 5 cent Vest Pocket, 5 and 10 cent Hi-Tops, 5 cent F.O.K. Mint Vendor, Wizard Cloc, Stoner Hold-Over  
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**FOR SALE:** Reproduction copies of the following items are available:

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- 3) E-Z Marquees (numbers or baseball) - \$8.50 each. All prices plus postage.

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Paul Hindin, 3712 West Scenic Ave., Mequon, WI 53092;  
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Email: BedVibr8or@aol.com; **SEE ME AT: drcoinop.com**

**FOR SALE:** Just picked up 32 issues of Marketplace Magazines. Most are 1977, some earlier...loaded with photos, prices, information and much more of early pinballs, slot, trade stimulators, vending machines and arcade machines. Great resource and a lot of fun to read. Price is \$10. each plus \$2. shipping each....or \$299. delivered to any of the continental U.S. States.

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**WANTED:** HAVE CASH, WILL TRAVEL. COLLECTOR LOOKING TO PURCHASE EARLY VENDING, GUMBALL AND PEANUT MACHINES AND UNUSUAL COUNTER-TOP MACHINES. ALSO LOOKING TO BUY BASEBALL, BASKETBALL AND FOOTBALL COUNTER MACHINES. TOP CASH PAID.

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**WANTED:** Master penny drop machine. Reproduction OK but original preferred. Columbus B with slug rejector. Reconditioned OK but nice original condition preferred. Please contact: Steve Kane, (240) 354-7794 or  
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Phone: (605) 887-3391 or Email: www.chadscoinop.com

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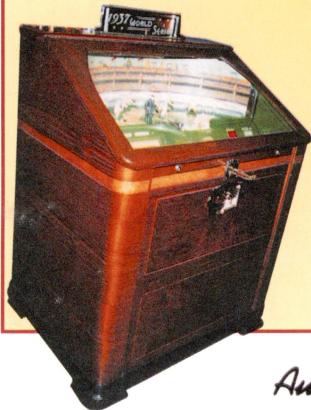
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